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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000899

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: SOI OUTSIDE BAGHDAD WANT TO SEE THE MONEY, LESS
CONCERNED ABOUT BAGHDAD ARRESTS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 885

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 860

Classified By: PMIN Robert Ford for reason 1.4 (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Sahwa/Sons of Iraq (SOI) and Sunni Arab contacts outside of Baghdad have not voiced major interest in the weekend arrest of local SOI leader Adel Al Mashhadani in the Fadhil neighborhood of Baghdad (ref B). In discussions with PRTs and Coalition Forces (CF) in the majority Sunni provinces of Anbar, Salah Ad Din (SAD), and Diyala, SOI and Sunni leaders did not express outrage over the arrest or fear that the Government of Iraq (GOI) is planning to extend arrests of SOI members to the provinces. Contacts emphasized that Baghdad SOI are not really connected with SOI groups in other provinces. SOIs in the provinces are upset, however, that the GOI has not yet established a reliable mechanism to pay SOI salaries and honor integration and new employment promises; they question the GOI's commitment to the program. Some SOI contacts also worry that SOI groups will be abandoned as CF leaves Iraq. END SUMMARY.

NO STRONG SAHWA/SOI AFFILIATION ACROSS PROVINCES

[1](#)2. (C) PRT and CF contacts in Anbar met with Dr. Salih Faraj, Comptroller for the Anbar Sahwa. When asked about the recent Al Mashhadani arrest and fighting in Baghdad, he stated tersely that he supported Sheikh Ahmed Abu Risha's moderate comments on the issue that appeared on the Sahwa website and in the press (reftels). NOTE: Sheikh Ahmed is the leader of the Conference of the Awakening in Iraq, a political party that developed out of the Sahwa movement in Anbar. END NOTE. CF in Anbar report that rank-and-file Sahwa do not pay much attention to events outside Anbar.

[1](#)3. (C) Hafeth Abdal Aziz Jumah, current Assistant Governor in Diyala province and close associate of SOI leaders there, told PRT Diyala that he doesn't think the arrest and subsequent violence in Baghdad have had an effect on Diyala's SOIs. He maintains that the Baghdad SOI have no real connection to the Diyala SOI. That said, Hafeth worried about the CF drawdown in Iraq, and feared that the Diyala SOI will be abandoned when CF leaves. In SAD province, SOI have still not expressed concerns about the arrest to the PRT or CF.

SAHWA/SOI ANGRY AT GOI FAILURE TO PAY SALARIES

[1](#)4. (C) The Sahwa in Anbar do notice that CF, and not the GOI, continue to pay their salaries. Sahwa members tell CF contacts that they have no confidence in the GOI and are skeptical of its commitment to the Sahwa/SOI program. Several Sahwa members have told CF that they will quit if the GOI doesn't begin paying them soon. A senior sheikh in charge of some Sahwa in the Abu Ghraib area has stressed to us the importance of uniform SOI salary levels; Sahwa, for example, in the Fallujah area (still paid by Marine units) receive about USD 130 dollars a month, less than half the

amount of other SOI. Similarly, in Diyala province, the PRT notes that the GOI's failure to pay SOI salaries there has caused real consternation among SOI members and the wider Sunni Arab community.

COMMENT

15. (C) CF established Sahwa/SOI programs in Sunni Arab communities, principally in central and north central Iraq, in 2006-2007. CF do not coordinate Sahwa/SOI activities across provinces beyond funding and general direction, and individual CF units have responsibility for local Sahwa/SOI units, which are not bound together by any national-level organization. The so-far muted response of Anbar, SAD, and Qorganization. The so-far muted response of Anbar, SAD, and Diyala Sahwa/SOI to our inquiries about Mashhadani's arrest illustrates that Sahwa/SOI groups are locally focused and not necessarily interested in SOI developments in other provinces. It also underlines that individual Sahwa/SOI groups do not see the arrest in Baghdad as an incipient threat to themselves. This could change, especially if the GOI is perceived as mounting a wider anti-SOI campaign -- as some local media have claimed.

16. (SBU) Although the Mashhadani arrest does not seem to have sparked great worries in the Sunni provinces, SOI groups across Iraq share doubts about the GOI's commitment to the Sahwa/SOI program, which have been amplified by recent interruptions to GOI payments of SOI salaries and the GOI's failure to honor its promise to integrate SOI members into the Iraqi Security Forces or find them other employment. END COMMENT.

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